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ABSTRACT

This booklet suggests ways for parents to help their preschool children grow, develop, and have fun learning. A brief opening section called "Learning Begins Early" provides a general context for the book. The second section, on what it means to be ready for school, describes the qualities and skills that youngsters need to get a good start in kindergarten. This section focuses on health and physical well-being, social and emotional preparation, language, and general knowledge. The third and longest section of the booklet describes a variety of suggested activities grouped by age: birth to 1 year; 1 to 2 years; 2 to 3 years; 3 to 4 years; and 4 to 5 years; each group begins with a set of age-appropriate tips and suggestions under the headings, "What to do," "What to expect," and "What they need." Activities for infants focus on developing trust and helping babies understand their world by means of touch and sight. Activities for 1- to 2-year-old children involve shopping, sock and finger puppets, and ways to develop motor skills. Activities for 2- to 3-year-olds include reading aloud, making music, and playing with dough. The part for 3- to 4-year-olds offers popular recipes, suggests art activities, and describes ways to turn chores into learning games. Activities that introduce hands-on mathematics and develop language skills are described in the part for 4- to 5-year-olds, which also offers advice on teaching children to get along with others. The fourth and last section of the booklet offers advice on what parents can do to make school seem a friendlier place both for the parents and for the child who is about to enter it for the first time. Finally, a set of appendices offers guidelines for forming good television habits and choosing child care, provides a ready-for-school checklist, suggests community resources, and lists books for both parents and preschoolers. (AC)

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Helping Your Child

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Get Ready for School

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Helping Your Child Get Ready for School

with activities for children
from birth through age 5

By Nancy Paulu

Edited by Wilma P. Greene
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October 1992

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Foreword

"Why?"

This is the question we parents are always trying to answer. It's good that children ask questions: that's the best way to learn. All children have two wonderful resources for learning—imagination and curiosity. As a parent, you can awaken your children to the joy of learning by encouraging their imagination and curiosity.

Helping Your Child Get Ready for School is one in a series of books on different education topics intended to help you make the most of your child's natural curiosity. Teaching and learning are not mysteries that can only happen in school. They also happen when parents and children do simple things together.

For instance, you and your child can: sort the socks on laundry day—sorting is a major function in math and science; cook a meal together—cooking involves not only math and science but good health as well; tell and read each other stories—storytelling is the basis for reading and writing (and a story about the past is also history); or play a game of hopscotch together—playing physical games will help your child learn to count and start on a road to lifelong fitness.

By doing things together, you will show that learning is fun and important. You will be encouraging your child to study, learn, and stay in school.

All of the books in this series tie in with the **National Education Goals** set by the President and the Governors. The goals state that, by the year 2000: every child will start school ready to learn; at least 90 percent of all students will graduate from high school; each American student will leave the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades demonstrating competence in core subjects; U.S. students will be first in the world in math and science

achievement; every American adult will be literate, will have the skills necessary to compete in a global economy, and will be able to exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; and American schools will be liberated from drugs and violence so they can focus on learning.

This book is a way for you to help meet these goals. It will give you a short rundown on facts, but the biggest part of the book is made up of simple, fun activities for you and your child to do together. Your child may even beg you to do them. At the end of the book is a list of resources, so you can continue the fun.

As U.S. Education Secretary Lamar Alexander has said:

> *The first teachers are the parents, both by example and conversation. But don't think of it as teaching. Think of it as fun.*

So, let's get started. I invite you to find an activity in this book and try it.

Diane Ravitch
Assistant Secretary and
Counselor to the Secretary

Contents

Foreword i

Learning Begins Early 1

What Does It Mean To Be Ready for School? 3

Good Health and Physical Well-Being 3
Social and Emotional Preparation 6
Language and General Knowledge 9

Activities 13

Birth to 1 Year 15
Developing Trust 16
Touch and See! 18
1 to 2 Years 20
Shop till You Drop 22
Puppet Magic 24
Moving On 26
2 to 3 Years 27
Read to Me! 28
Music Makers 30
Play Dough 32
3 to 4 Years 33
Kitchen Cut-Ups 34
Scribble, Paint, and Paste 36
Chores! 38
4 to 5 Years 39
"Hands-on" Math 40
Getting Along 42
My Book 44

What About Kindergarten? 45

Appendices

Good Television Habits 47
Choosing Child Care 48
Ready-for-School Checklist 50
Community Resources 51
Notes 52
Books 54

Acknowledgments **57**

Learning Begins Early

The road to success in school begins early. Good health, loving relationships, and opportunities to learn all help preschool children do well later in life. But many parents wonder, "How can I give these things to my child?"

This book is for all of you who have asked this question. It's for parents, grandparents, and others who want to know what to do to help young children get ready for school. Throughout the preschool years, you can do many simple things to help your child grow, develop, and have fun learning. This book:

- Describes the qualities and skills that youngsters need to get a good start in kindergarten;
- Tells what to expect from preschoolers each year from birth to age 5;
- Suggests easy activities that help children grow and develop; and
- Explains how to encourage enthusiasm toward school and teachers and make it easier for children to adjust to kindergarten.

Special sections in the back of the book tell how to monitor television viewing and find good programs; explain how to find suitable child care; and list books and community resources that may be helpful.

Parents and caregivers are busy people. Most of us have many responsibilities: jobs outside the home, laundry to wash, and groceries to buy. When we are tired and under stress, it's often hard to feel we are being the best parents.

But however busy we may be, there are lots of things we can do to help our children get ready for school—little

things that make a big difference. Many of them cost little or nothing and can be done as you go about your daily routines.

Mothers and fathers aren't the only people who help children get ready for school. Entire communities share this job. Businesses, schools, government agencies, and religious and civic organizations help out. So do day care providers, doctors and other health professionals, elected officials, relatives, and neighbors. But no one is more important than parents, because life's most basic lessons are learned early and at home. The first 5 years are when the groundwork for future development is laid.

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What Does It Mean To Be Ready for School?

There is no one quality or skill that children need to do well in school, but a combination of things contributes to success. These include good health and physical well-being, social and emotional maturity, language skills, an ability to solve problems and think creatively, and general knowledge about the world.

As you go about helping your child develop in each of these areas, remember

- Children develop at different rates, and
- Most children are stronger in some areas than in others.

Remember, too, that being ready for school depends partly on what the school expects. One school may think it's very important for children to sit quietly and know the alphabet. Another may believe it's more important for children to get along well with others.

Children who match the school's expectations may be considered better prepared. You may want to visit your child's school to learn what the principal and teachers expect and discuss any areas of disagreement.

While schools may have different priorities, most educators agree that the following areas are important for success.

Good Health and Physical Well-Being

Young children need nutritious food, enough sleep, safe places to play, and regular medical care. These things help children get a good start in life and lessen the chances that they will later have serious health problems or trouble learning.

Good health for children begins before birth with **good prenatal care.** Visit a doctor or medical clinic throughout your pregnancy. In addition, eat nourishing foods, avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other harmful drugs, and get plenty of rest.

Pregnant women who don't take good care of themselves increase their chances of giving birth to children who

- Are low in birth weight, making them more likely to have lifelong health and learning problems;
- Develop asthma;
- Are mentally retarded;
- Develop speech and language problems;
- Have short attention spans; or
- Become hyperactive.

If your child already has some of these problems, it is a good idea to consult your doctor, your school district, or community agencies as soon as possible. Many communities have free or inexpensive services to help you and your child.

Good health for children continues after birth with a balanced diet. School-aged children can concentrate better in class if they eat **nutritionally balanced meals.** These should include breads, cereals, and other grain products; fruits; vegetables; meat, poultry, fish and alternatives (such as eggs and dried beans and peas); and milk, cheese, and yogurt. Avoid too many fats and sweets.

Children aged 2-5 generally can eat the same foods as adults but in smaller portions. Your child's doctor or clinic can provide advice on feeding babies and toddlers under the age of 2.

Federal, state, and local aid is available for parents who need food in order to make sure their children get a balanced diet. The federal nutrition program, called the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), distributes food to more than 5.4 million low-income women and their children through about 8,200 service centers across the country. Food stamps also are available for many families with children. For information and to find out if you are eligible, contact your local or state health department.

Preschoolers require regular **medical and dental check-ups and immunizations.** It's important to find a doctor or a clinic where children can receive routine health care as well as special treatment if they are sick or injured.

Children need immunizations beginning around the age of 2 months to prevent nine diseases: measles, mumps, German measles (rubella), diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, Hib (Haemophilus influenzae type b), polio, and tuberculosis. These diseases can have serious effects on physical and mental development. Regular dental checkups should begin at the latest by the age of 3.

Preschoolers need **opportunities to exercise and develop physical coordination.** To learn to control large muscles, children need to throw balls, run, jump, climb, and dance to music. To learn to control small muscles, particularly in the hands and fingers, they need to color with crayons, put together puzzles, use blunt-tipped scissors, and zip jackets. In kindergarten, they will build upon these skills.

Parents of youngsters with disabilities should see a doctor as soon as a problem is suspected. Early intervention can help these children develop to their full potential.

Social and Emotional Preparation

Young children are often very excited about entering school. But when they do, they can face an environment that's different from what they are used to at home or even in preschool. In kindergarten, they will need to work well in large groups and get along with new adults and other children. They will have to share the teacher's attention with other youngsters. The classroom routines may also be different.

Most 5-year-olds do not start school with good social skills or much emotional maturity. These take time and practice to learn. However, children improve their chances for success in kindergarten if they have had opportunities to *begin* developing these qualities:

Confidence. Children must learn to feel good about themselves and believe they can succeed. Confident children are more willing to attempt new tasks—and try again if they don't succeed the first time.

Independence. Children need to learn to do things for themselves.

Motivation. Children must want to learn.

Curiosity. Children are naturally curious and must remain so in order to get the most out of learning opportunities.

Persistence. Children must learn to finish what they start.

Cooperation. Children must be able to get along with others and learn to share and take turns.

Self-control. Preschoolers must understand that some behaviors, such as hitting and biting, are inappropriate. They need to learn that there are good and bad ways to express anger.

Empathy. Children must learn to have an interest in others and understand how others feel.

Parents, even more than child care centers and good schools, help children develop these skills. Here are some ways you can help your child acquire these positive qualities:

Youngsters must believe that, no matter what, someone will look out for them. Show that you care about your children. They thrive when they have parents or other caregivers who are loving and dependable. Small children need attention, encouragement, hugs, and plenty of lap time. Children who feel loved are more likely to be confident.

Set a good example. Children imitate what they see others do and what they hear others say. When parents exercise and eat nourishing food, children are more likely to do so. When parents treat others with respect, their children probably will, too. If parents share things, their children will learn to be thoughtful of others' feelings.

Have a positive attitude toward learning and toward school. Children come into this world with a powerful need to discover and to explore. Parents need to encourage this curiosity if children are to keep it. Enthusiasm for what children do ("You've drawn a great picture!") helps to make them proud of their achievements.

Children also become excited about school when their parents show excitement. As your child approaches kindergarten, talk to him about school. Talk about the exciting activities in kindergarten, such as going on field

trips and making fun art projects. Be enthusiastic as you describe what he will learn in school—how to read and measure and weigh things, for example.

Provide opportunities for repetition. It takes practice to crawl, pronounce new words, or drink from a cup. Children don't get bored when they repeat things. Instead, repeating things until they are learned helps youngsters build the confidence needed to try something new.

Use appropriate discipline. All children need to have limits set for them. Children whose parents give firm but loving discipline are generally more skilled socially and do better in school than children whose parents set too few or too many limits. Here are some tips.

- Direct children's activities, but don't make unnecessary restrictions or try to dominate.
- Offer reasons when asking your child to do something (For example, say, "Please move the toy truck off the stairs so no one falls over it"—not, "Do it because I said so.").
- Listen to your children to find out how they feel and whether they need any special support.
- Show love and respect when you are angry. Criticize a child's behavior but not the child (For example, say, "I love you, but it is not okay for you to draw pictures on the walls. I get angry when you do that.").
- Help your children make choices and work out problems (You might ask your 4-year-old, "What can we do to keep Kevin from knocking over your blocks?").

- Be positive and encouraging. Praise your child for a job well done. Smiles and encouragement go much further to shape good behavior than harsh punishment.

Let children do many things by themselves. Young children need to be closely watched. But they learn to be independent and to develop confidence by doing tasks such as dressing themselves and putting their toys away. It's also important to let them make choices, rather than deciding everything for them. Remember to give them a choice only when there really is one.

Encourage your children to play with other children and be with adults who are not family members. Preschoolers need these social opportunities to learn to see the point of view of others. Young children are more likely to get along with teachers and classmates if they already have had experiences with different adults and children.

Language and General Knowledge

Kindergarteners participate in many activities that require them to use language and to solve problems. Children who can't or don't communicate easily may have problems in school. There are many things you can do to help children learn to communicate, solve problems, and develop an understanding of the world. You can

Give your child opportunities to play. Play is how children learn. It is the natural way for them to explore, to become creative, and to develop academic and social skills. Play helps them learn to solve problems—for example, a wagon tips over, and children must figure out how to get it upright again. Children learn about geometry, shapes, and balance when they stack up blocks. Playing with others helps children learn how to negotiate.

Talk to your children, beginning at birth. Babies need to hear your voice. A television or the radio can't take the place of your voice because it doesn't respond to coos and babbles. The more you talk to your baby, the more he will have to talk about as he gets older. Talking with children broadens their understanding of language and of the world.

Everyday activities, such as eating dinner or taking a bath, provide opportunities to talk, sometimes in detail, about what's happening and respond to your child. "First let's stick the plug in the drain. Now we'll turn on the water. I see you want to put your rubber duck in the bathtub. That's a good idea. Look, it's yellow, just like the rubber duck on 'Sesame Street.'"

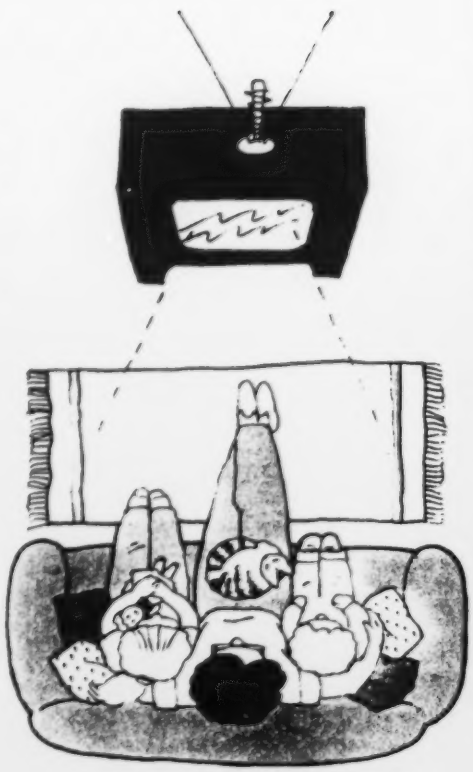
Listen to your children. Children have their own special thoughts and feelings, joys and sorrows, hopes and fears. As their language skills develop, encourage them to talk. Listening is the best way to learn what's on their minds and to discover what they know and don't know, and how they think and learn. It also shows children that their feelings and ideas are valuable.

Answer questions and ask questions, particularly ones that require more than a "yes" or "no" response. While walking in a park, for example, most 2- and 3-year-olds will stop to pick up leaves. You might point out how the leaves are the same, and how they are different. With older children you might ask, "What else grows on trees?"

Questions can help children learn to compare and classify things. Answer your children's questions thoughtfully and, whenever possible, encourage them to answer their own questions. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. Then together with your child try to find the answer.

Read aloud to your children every day. Reading can begin with babies and continue throughout the preschool years. Even though they don't understand the story or the poem, reading together gives children a chance to learn about language, enjoy the sound of your voice, and be close to you. You don't have to be an excellent reader for your child to enjoy this time together. You may also want to take your child to a local library that offers special story hours.

Make reading materials available. Children develop an interest in language and in reading much sooner if they have books and other reading materials around their homes. A list at the end of this booklet suggests some of the many good books for preschoolers.



Monitor television viewing. Next to parents, television may be our children's most influential teacher. Good television can introduce children to new worlds and promote learning, but poor or too much TV can be harmful.

Be realistic about your children's abilities and interests. Children usually do best in school when parents estimate their abilities correctly. Parents must set high standards and encourage their preschoolers to try new things. Children who aren't challenged become bored. But ones who are pushed along too quickly, or are asked to do things that don't interest them, can become frustrated and unhappy.

Try to keep your children from being labeled. Labels such as "dumb" or "stupid" have a powerful effect on a child's confidence and school performance. Remember to praise your child for a job well done.

Provide opportunities to do and see things. The more varied the experiences that children have, the more they learn about the world. No matter where you live, your community can provide new experiences. Go for

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walks in your neighborhood, or go places on the bus. Visit museums, libraries, zoos, and other community resources.

If you live in the city, spend a day in the country (or if you live in the country, spend a day in the city). Let your children hear and make music, dance, and paint. Let them participate in activities that help to develop their imaginations and let them express their ideas and feelings. The following activities can provide your children with these opportunities.

Activities

The activities in this section are simple and are designed to prepare children for school. Most of them grow out of the routine things parents do everyday.

Each section is organized by ages. An age grouping begins with "What to expect"—a list of qualities and behaviors typical of these children. This is followed by "What they need"—a list of things that help these children grow and learn. In a box near the end of each activity are explanations for those who want them. As you go through this section, it is good to remember these points:

Children learn at their own pace. Most move through similar developmental stages, but they have their own timetables. Therefore, the "What to expect" and the "What they need" sections, as well as the ages suggested for the activities, will vary from child to child. An activity listed for a youngster between the ages of 2 and 3 may be fine for one who is younger. Or it may not interest another until he has passed his third birthday.

Some of these activities, while listed under a particular age, are important for all young children. Reading and listening to music, for example, can benefit children from the time they are born. By modifying an activity, you can enable your child to continue to enjoy it as he grows and develops.

The symbols next to the activities can guide you.

for an infant (birth to 1)

for a toddler (ages 2 to 3)

crayon for a preschooler (ages 4 to 5)

Find activities that interest your child. If the one you picked out is too hard, your child may get discouraged. If it's too easy, he may get bored. Or if your child seems uninterested, try another time. Often children's interests change as they grow and develop. Try to give toddlers and older children a choice of activities so they learn to think for themselves.

The activities are meant to be fun. Be enthusiastic and avoid lecturing to preschoolers on what they are learning. If your child enjoys the activity, his excitement for learning will increase.

Finally, be sure to make safety a top priority. With that caution in mind, flip through the following pages and find some activities that you and your child can enjoy together.

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Birth to 1 Year

What to expect

Babies grow and change dramatically during their first year. They begin to

- Develop some control over their bodies. They learn to hold up their heads; roll over; sit up; crawl; stand up; and, in some cases, walk.
- Become aware of themselves as separate from others. They learn to look at their hands and toes and play with them. They learn to cry when parents leave, and they recognize their name.
- Communicate and develop language skills. First babies cry and make throaty noises. Later they babble and say mama and dada. Then they make lots of sounds and begin to name a few close people and objects.
- Play games. First they play with their hands. Later they show an interest in toys, enjoy "putting in and taking out" games, and eventually carry around or hug dolls or stuffed toys.
- Relate to others. First they respond to adults more than to other babies. Later they notice other babies but tend to treat them like objects instead of people. Then they pay attention when other babies cry.

What they need

Babies require

- A loving caregiver who can respond to their cries and gurgles;
- Someone who gets to know their special qualities;
- Someone to keep them safe and comfortable;
- Opportunities to move about and practice new physical skills;
- Safe objects to look at, bat, grab, bang, pat, roll, and examine;
- Safe play areas; and
- Opportunities to hear language and to make sounds.

Developing Trust

Newborn babies need to become attached to at least one person who provides security and love. This first and most basic emotional attachment is the start for all human relationships.

What you'll need

Loving arms
Music

What to do

1. Include happy rituals in your baby's schedule. For example, at bedtime, sing the same song every night, rock her, or rub her tummy.

2. Pick up your crying baby promptly. Try to find out what's wrong. Is she hungry? Wet? Bored? Too hot? Crying is your baby's way of communicating. By comforting her you send the message that language has a purpose and that someone wants to understand.

3. Gently move your newborn's arms and legs. Or tickle her lightly under the chin or on the tummy. When she starts to control her head, lie on the floor and put her on your chest. Let her reach for your nose or grab your hair. Talk to her and name each thing she touches.

4. Sing and cuddle with your baby. Hold her snuggled in your arms or lying face up on your lap with her head on your knees. Make sure the head of a newborn is well-supported. Sing a favorite lullaby.

To entertain your baby, sing an active song. For example:

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands!
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands!
If you're happy and you know it, and you want
the world to know it,
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands!

If you don't know lullabies or rhymes for babies, make up your own!

5. Dance with your baby. To soothe her when she's upset, put her head on your shoulder and hum softly or listen to recorded music as you glide around the room. To amuse her when she's cheerful, try a bouncy tune.

Feeling your touch, hearing your voice, and enjoying the comfort of physical closeness all help a baby to develop trust.

Touch and See!

Babies are hard at work whenever they are awake, trying to learn all about the world. To help them learn, they need many different safe things to play with and inspect. Objects you have around your home offer many possibilities.

What you'll need

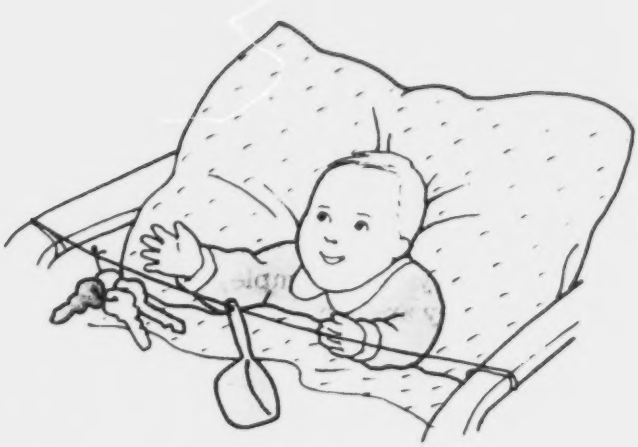
A splinter-free wooden spoon with a face drawn on the bowl
Different textured fabrics, such as velvet, cotton, corduroy, terry cloth, satin, burlap, and fake fur
An empty toilet paper or paper towel roll
Pots, pans, and lids
An old purse or basket with things to put in and take out
Measuring cups and spoons
Boxes and plastic containers
Large spools
Noisemakers (rattles, keys, a can filled with beans)

What to do

1. Put one or two of the items to the left in a safe play area where your baby can reach them (more than two may confuse him).

2. Let your baby look at, touch, and listen to a variety of objects. Ones that are brightly colored, have interesting textures, and make noises are particularly good. **Be sure that any item you give your baby will be safe in his mouth, since that's where it probably will end up.**

3. Use these items for all age groups. Many of them will continue to interest toddlers and older preschoolers. For example, babies love to inspect a paper towel roll. But with a 4-year-old, it can become a megaphone for talking or singing, a telescope, or a tunnel for a toy car.



Babies begin to understand how the world works when they see, touch, hold, and shake things. Inspecting things also helps them coordinate and strengthen their hand muscles.

1 to 2 Years

What to expect

Children this age are

- Energetic (walk more steadily, run, push, pull, take apart, carry, and climb on and grab things);
- Self-centered; and
- Busy (like to flip light switches, pour things in and out of containers, unwrap packages, and empty drawers).

Between their first and second birthdays, they

- Like to imitate the sounds and actions of others (by pretending to do housework or yardwork, for example);
- Want to be independent and do it themselves (and express this by saying "No!");
- Can be clingy;
- Can have relatively short attention spans if not involved in an activity;
- Add variations to their physical skills (by walking backwards or sideways, for example);
- Begin to see how they are like and unlike other children;
- Become more sensitive to the moods of others;
- Play alone or alongside other toddlers; and
- Increase their vocabularies from about 2 or 3 words to about 250 words and understand more of what people say to them.

What they need

Children this age require

- A safe environment for exploring;
- Opportunities to make their own choices ("Do you want the red cup or the blue one?");
- Clear and reasonable limits;

- Opportunities to use big muscles (in the arms and legs, for example);
- Opportunities to manipulate small objects, such as puzzles and stackable toys;
- Activities that allow them to touch, taste, smell, hear, and see new things;
- Chances to learn about "cause and effect"—that things they do produce certain results (when a stack of blocks gets too high it will fall over);
- Opportunities to develop and practice their language skills; and
- Chances to learn about kindness and caring.

Shop till You Drop

Shopping is just one of many routines that can help your child learn. It's especially good for teaching new words and introducing preschoolers to new people and places.

What you'll need

A short shopping list

Shopping is one of many ways to surround children with meaningful talk. They need to hear a lot of words in order to learn to communicate themselves. It's particularly helpful when you talk about the "here and now"—things that are going on in front of your child.

What to do

1. Pick a time when neither you nor your child is hungry or tired.

2. At the grocery store, put your child in the grocery cart so that he faces you. Take your time as you walk up and down the aisles.

3. Talk about what you are seeing and doing: "First, we're going to buy some cereal. See, it's in a big red and blue box. Listen to the great noise it makes when I shake the box. Can you shake the box? Now we're going to pay for the groceries. We'll put them on the counter while I get out the money. The cashier will tell us how much we have to pay."

4. Let your child feel the items you buy—a cold carton of milk, for example, or the skin of an orange. Talk to your child about the items. "The skin of the orange is rough and bumpy. Can Rochelle feel the skin?"

5. Be sure to name objects you see on a shopping trip.

6. Let your child touch a soft sweater or try on a hat or a mitten. Find a mirror so he can see himself. Talk as you go. "Feel how soft the sweater is. Who's that in the mirror? Is that Andre?"

7. Let your child practice his "hi's" and "bye-byes" on clerks and other shoppers on your outings.

8. Keep talking, keep moving, and let your child "help." "In this store we need to buy some buttons. You can hold the cloth next to the buttons so I can find the right color." Putting your toddler's hands in the right position can help him learn to understand your directions.

9. Leave for home before your child gets grumpy.

Puppet Magic

Puppets can be fascinating. Children know that puppets are not alive. And yet, they move and talk like real living things. Try making one at home.

What you'll need

An old clean sock
Buttons (larger than 1 inch in diameter to prevent swallowing)
Needle and thread
Red fabric
Ribbon
An old glove
Felt-tipped pens
Nontoxic glue
Yarn

What to do

1. **Sock puppet**. Use an old clean sock. Sew on buttons for eyes and nose. Paste or sew on a piece of red fabric for the mouth. Put a bow made from ribbon at the neck.

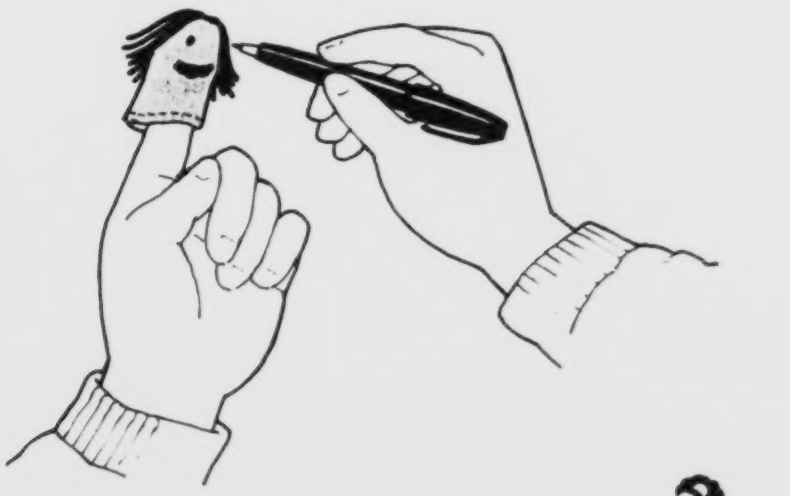
2. **Finger puppets**. Cut the ends off the fingers of an old glove. Draw faces on the fingers with felt-tipped pens. Glue yarn on for hair.

3. Have the puppet talk to your child. "Hello. My name is Tanya. What a great T-shirt you have on! I like the rabbit on the front of your T-shirt." Or have the puppet sing a simple song. Change your voice when the puppet talks or sings.

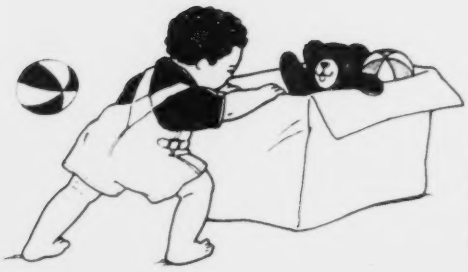
4. Encourage your child to speak to the puppet.

5. Put finger puppets on your child to give him practice moving his fingers one at a time.

6. The next time you want help cleaning up, have the puppet make the request: "Hello, Maria. Let's put these crayons back in the box and these toys back on the shelves. Can you get me the ball?"



Puppets provide another opportunity to talk to children and encourage them to speak. They also help children learn new words, use their imaginations, and develop their hand and finger coordination. Children will make many mistakes when they learn to talk. Instead of correcting them directly, reply by using the right grammar. For example, if your child says, "Michael done it," reply, "Yes, David, Michael did it." Speak slowly and clearly so that your child can imitate your speech. Use full, but short sentences, and avoid baby talk.



Moving On

Toddlers love to explore spaces and climb over, through, and into things.

What you'll need

Stuffed animal or toy
Large cardboard boxes
Pillows
A large sheet
A soft ball
A large plastic laundry basket
Elastic
Bells

These skills help children gain control over their large muscles. They also help children learn important concepts such as *up*, *down*, *inside*, *outside*, *over*, and *under*.

What to do

1. **Pillow jump**. Give your toddler some pillows to jump into. Toddlers usually figure out how to do this one on their own!

2. **Box car**. Give your toddler a large box to push around the room. He may want to take his stuffed animal or toy for a ride in it. If the box isn't too high—you'll most likely find your toddler in there, too!

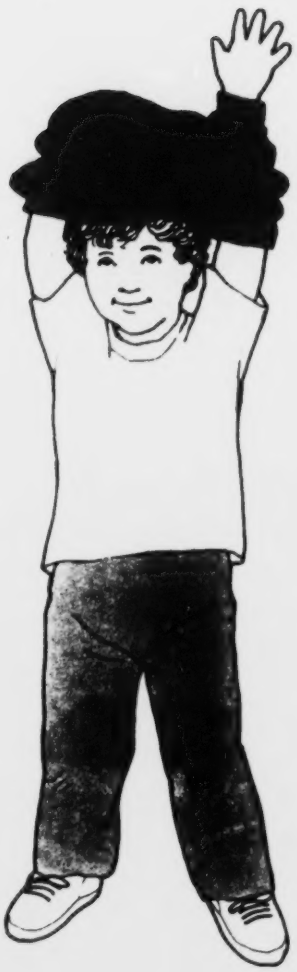
3. **Basketball**. Sit about 3 feet away from your toddler and hold out a large plastic laundry basket. Let him try throwing a ball into the basket.

4. **Table tent**. Cover a table with a sheet that's big enough to reach the ground on all sides. This makes a great playhouse that's particularly good for a rainy day. Watch out for bumped heads!

5. **Jingle bells**. Sew bells onto elastic that will fit comfortably around your child's ankles. Then watch (and listen to) the fun while he moves about or jumps up and down.

2 to 3 Years

What to expect



Children this age are

- Becoming more aware of others and their own feelings;
- Often stubborn and may have temper tantrums;
- Developing a great interest in other children and enjoy being near them (although they are usually self-centered);
- Able to jump, hop, roll, and climb;
- Developing an interest in pretend play—playing at keeping house, for example, or pretending to cook and care for a baby;
- Expanding their vocabularies (from about 250 to 1,000 words during the year); and
- Putting together 2, 3, and 4-word sentences.

What they need

Children this age require opportunities to

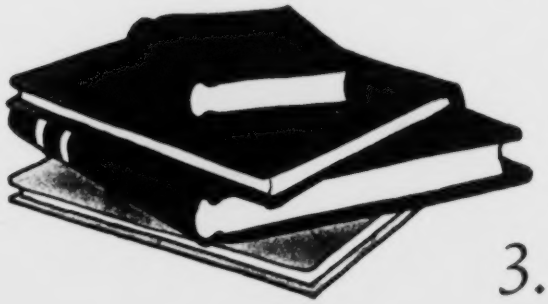
- Develop hand coordination (with puzzles or large beads to string or by scribbling, for example);
- Do more things for themselves, such as putting on clothing;
- Sing, talk, and develop their language;
- Play with other children;
- Try out different ways to move their bodies; and
- Do things in the community, such as taking walks and visiting libraries, museums, informal restaurants, parks, beaches, and zoos.

Read to Me!

The single most important way for children to develop the knowledge they need to succeed in reading is for you to read aloud to them—beginning early.

What you'll need

Good books
A children's dictionary (preferably a sturdy one)
Paper, pencils, crayons, markers



What to do

1. Read aloud to your child every day. From birth to 6 months your baby probably won't understand what you're reading, but that's okay. You can get her used to the sound of your voice and used to seeing and touching books.

2. To start out, use board books with no words or just a few words. Point to the colors and the pictures and say their names. Simple books can teach children things that will later help them learn to read. For example, they learn about the structure of language—that there are spaces between the words and that the print goes from left to right.

3. Tell stories. Encourage your child to ask questions and talk about the story. Ask her to predict what will come next. Point to things in books that she can relate to in her own life: "Look at the picture of the penguin. Do you remember the penguin we saw at the zoo?"

4. Look for reading programs. If you aren't a good reader, programs in your community like Even Start can provide opportunities for you to improve your own reading and to read with your child. Friends and relatives can also read to your child, and senior citizen volunteers are available in many communities to do the same.

The ability to read and understand makes for better students and leads to better job opportunities and a lifetime of enjoyment.

5. Buy a children's dictionary—if possible, one that has pictures next to the words. Then start the "let's look it up" habit.

6. Make writing materials available.

7. Watch educational TV. Programs such as "Sesame Street" and "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood" help your child learn the alphabet and the sounds they represent.

8. Visit the library often. Begin making weekly trips to the library when your child is very young. See that your child gets a library card as soon as possible. Many libraries issue cards to children as soon as they can print their names (you'll have to countersign for them). See the community resources section in the back of this booklet for more information about libraries.

9. Read yourself. What you do sets an example for your child.

Music Makers

Music is a way to communicate that all children understand. It's not necessary for them to follow the words to a song. It makes them happy just to hear the comfort in your voice or on the recording or to dance to a peppy tune.

What you'll need

Your voice
Music
Music makers (rattles, a can filled with beans or buttons, empty toilet paper rolls, pots, pans, plastic bowls)

What to do

1. Sing a lullaby to a cranky infant.

2. As children approach their first birthdays, they begin to like making music themselves. Have them try banging a wooden spoon on pots, pans, or plastic bowls; shaking a large rattle or shaking a plastic container filled with beans, buttons, or other noisy items (make sure the container is securely closed); and blowing through empty toilet paper rolls.

3. As toddlers pass their first birthdays, they can actively participate in nursery rhymes, even if they can't recite the words. They can imitate hand movements, clap, or hum along.

4. As preschoolers become more physically coordinated, encourage them to move to the music. They can twirl, spin, jump up and down, tiptoe, or sway.

5. Here are some tips for getting young children to sing:

- Sing yourself. Sing fairly slowly so children join in and enjoy themselves. Discourage shouting.
- Start with simple chanting. Pick a simple melody, such as "Mary Had a Little Lamb," and sing "la, la, la." Add the words later.

Introduce music to your children early. Listening to you sing will help them learn to make their voices go up and down—even if you can't carry a tune! Music and dance teach preschoolers to listen, to coordinate hand and finger movements, and to express themselves creatively.

Play Dough

Young children love to play with dough. And no wonder! They can squish and pound it and form it into fascinating shapes. Here's a recipe to make at home.

What you'll need

2 cups flour
1 cup salt
4 teaspoons cream of tartar
2 cups water
2 tablespoons cooking oil
Food coloring
Food extracts (almond, vanilla, lemon, or peppermint)
1 medium saucepan
Things to stick in the dough (popsicle sticks, straws)
Things to pound with (like a toy mallet)
Things to make impressions with (jar lids, cookie cutters, or bottle caps)

What to do

1. Add the food coloring to the water. Then mix all of the ingredients together in a pan.

2. Cook over medium heat, stirring until it forms a soft ball.

3. Let the mixture cool. Knead slightly. Add food extracts to different chunks of the dough if you want different smells.

4. Give some to your toddler or preschooler, so he can pound it, stick things in it, make impressions in it, and create all kinds of things.

Play dough is a great way to develop hand muscles and be creative. And cooking together, with all the measuring, is the perfect way to begin learning mathematics. Letting your child handle some dough while it is still slightly warm and some when it has cooled off is a terrific way to teach him about temperatures. Play dough can be made ahead of time and stored in an air-tight bag or container.

3 to 4 Years

What to expect

Children this age

- Start to play with other children, instead of next to them;
- Are more likely to take turns and share;
- Are friendly and giving;
- Begin to understand that other people have feelings and rights;
- Like silly humor, riddles, and practical jokes;
- Like to please and to conform;
- Generally become more cooperative and enjoy new experiences;
- Are increasingly self-reliant and probably can dress without help (except for buttons and shoelaces);
- May develop fears ("Mommy, there's a monster under my bed.") and have imaginary companions;
- Are more graceful physically than 2-year-olds and love to run, skip, jump with both feet, catch a ball, climb downstairs, and dance to music;
- Are great talkers, speak in sentences, and continue to add more words to their vocabularies; and
- Have greater control over hand and arm muscles, which is reflected in their drawings and scribblings.

What they need

Children this age require opportunities to

- Develop their blooming language abilities through books, games, songs, science, and art activities;
- Develop more self-help skills—for example, to dress and undress themselves;
- Draw with crayons, work puzzles, build things, and pretend;
- Play with other children so they can learn to listen, take turns, and share; and
- Develop more physical coordination—for example, by hopping on both feet.

Kitchen Cut-Ups

Here are some recipes popular with preschoolers. Things always seem to taste better when you make them yourself!

What you'll need

Knife

For **applewiches**: 1 apple, cheese slices

For **funny-face sandwich**: 1 piece of bread; peanut butter, cream cheese, or egg salad; green pepper, celery, radishes, carrot curls; olives; nuts; hard-boiled egg slices; tiny shapes of cheese; apples and raisins

For **fruit Popsicles**: fruit juice (any kind), an ice cube tray or small paper cups, yogurt, mashed or crushed fruit, Popsicle sticks

For **bumps on a log**: celery, peanut butter, raisins

What to do

1. Choose a safe spot to cook where you won't have to worry about making a mess.

2. Tell your child what the ingredients are. Talk about what you are doing as you go along. Ask and answer questions.

3. Let him smell, taste, and touch as you go. Let him (with your help) pour, stir, measure, and help clean up.

4. **Applewiches**. Core an apple. Cut the apple crosswise into thick slices. Put cheese slices between the slices. Cheddar cheese is particularly good. Eat like a sandwich.

5. **Funny-face sandwich**. Cut the bread into a circle. Spread with cream cheese, peanut butter, or egg salad. Decorate using green pepper, celery, radishes, carrot curls, olives, nuts, hard-boiled egg slices, tiny shapes of cheese, apples, or raisins for eyes, ears, nose, and mouth.

6. **Fruit Popsicles**. Pour the fruit juice into small paper cups or an ice cube tray. Place a Popsicle stick in each cup or compartment before the juice is completely frozen. Return to the freezer until frozen solid. For variations, mix yogurt with the juice before freezing for a creamier Popsicle, or add mashed or crushed fruit such as strawberries, pineapple, or banana.

7. **Bumps on a log**. Spread peanut butter on the celery stalks. Decorate with raisins. Great snacks!

Cooking helps children learn new words, measuring and number skills, what foods are healthy and what ones aren't, and the importance of completing what they begin. It also teaches about how things change, and it can teach children to reason better. ("If I want a cold fruit juice Popsicle, then I'll have to put it in the freezer.")

Scribble, Paint, and Paste

Young children are natural artists. Here are some activities that introduce preschoolers to scribbling, painting, and pasting.

What you'll need

For **scribbling**: crayons, water-soluble felt-tipped markers, different kinds of paper (including construction paper, butcher paper), and tape

For **fingerpainting**: store-bought fingerpaint or homemade fingerpaint made with soap flakes, water, food coloring or powdered tempera; an eggbeater or fork; a bowl; a spoon; an apron or smock; newspapers or a large piece of plastic to cover the floor or table; butcher paper; and tape

For **collages**: paper, paste, blunt-tipped scissors, fabric scraps or objects that can be glued to paper (string, cottonballs, sticks, yarn)

What to do

1. **Scribbling.** Give your child different kinds of paper and different writing materials to scribble with. Coloring books are not needed. Fat crayons are good to begin with. Water-soluble felt-tipped marking pens are fun because your child doesn't have to use much pressure to get a bright color. Tape a large piece of butcher paper onto a table top and let your preschooler scribble to her heart's content!

2. **Fingerpainting.** Use store-bought fingerpaint, or make your own by mixing soap flakes (not detergent) in a bowl with a small amount of water. Beat the mixture with a fork or eggbeater. Add powdered tempera paint or food coloring. Spread out newspapers or a large piece of plastic over a table or on the floor and tape a big piece of construction paper or butcher paper on top. Cover your child with a large smock or apron, and let her fingerpaint.

3. **Collage**. Have your child paste fabric scraps or other objects such as yarn, string, or cottonballs to the paper (in any pattern). Let her feel the different textures and tell you about them.

Here are a few tips about introducing your preschoolers to art:

- Supervise carefully. [illegible]ildren would rather color your wal[illegible]he paper. Some also like to chew on crayons and markers or try to drink the paint.
- Don't tell them what to draw or paint.
- Don't fix up their pictures. It will take lots of practice before you can recognize their pictures—and that often doesn't happen until after they are in kindergarten.
- Give them lots of different materials to work with. Parents can demonstrate new types of art materials.
- Find an art activity that's at the right level for your child, then let him do as much of the project as possible.
- Ask your preschooler to talk about his picture.
- Display your child's art prominently in your home.

Art projects can spark young imaginations and help children to express themselves. These projects also help children to develop the eye and hand coordination they will later need to learn to write.

Chores!

Any household task can become a good learning game and can be fun.

What you'll need

Jobs around the home that need to get done, such as:

Doing the laundry
Washing and drying dishes
Carrying out the garbage
Setting the dinner table
Dusting

Home chores can help children learn new words, how to listen and follow directions, how to count, and how to sort. Chores can also help children improve their physical coordination and learn responsibility.

What to do

1. Tell your child about the job you will do together. Explain why the family needs the job done. Describe how you will do it and how your child can help.

2. Teach your child new words that belong to each job. "Let's put the *placemats* on the table, along with the *napkins*."

3. Doing laundry together provides many opportunities to learn. Ask your child to help you remember all the clothes that need to be washed. See how many things he can name. Socks? T-shirts? Pajamas? Have him help you gather all the dirty clothes. Have your child help you make piles of light and dark colors.

   Show your child how to measure out the soap, and have him pour the soap into the machine. Let him put the items into the machine, naming them. Keep out one sock. When the washer is filled with water, take out a sock. Let your child hold the wet sock and the one you kept out. Ask him which one feels heavier and which one feels lighter. After the wash is done, have your child sort his own things into piles that are the same (for example, T-shirts, socks).

4 to 5 Years

What to expect

Children this age

- Are active and have lots of energy;
- May be aggressive in their play;
- Can show extremes from being loud and adventurous to acting shy and dependent;
- Enjoy more group activities because they have longer attention spans;
- Like making faces and being silly;
- May form cliques with friends and can be bossy;
- May change friendships quickly;
- May brag and engage in name-calling during play;
- May experiment with swear words and bathroom words;
- Can be very imaginative and like to exaggerate;
- Have better control in running, jumping, and hopping but tend to be clumsy;
- Are great talkers and questioners; and
- Love to use words in rhymes, nonsense, and jokes.

What they need

Children this age need opportunities to

- Experiment and discover within limits;
- Use blunt-tipped scissors, crayons, and put together simple jigsaw puzzles;
- Practice outdoor play activities;
- Develop their growing interest in academic things, such as science and mathematics, and activities that involve exploring and investigating;
- Group items that are similar (for example, by size);
- Stretch their imaginations and curiosity; and
- See how reading and writing are useful (for example, by listening to stories and poems, dictating stories, and by talking with other children and adults).

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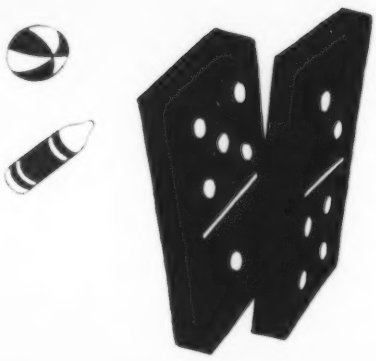

"Hands-on" Math

Real-life, hands-on activities are the best way to introduce your preschooler to mathematics!

What you'll need

Optional:
Blocks
Dice or dominoes

It's best not to use drills or arithmetic worksheets with young children. These can make children dislike math because they don't fit with the way they learn math naturally.

What to do

1. Talk a lot about numbers and use number concepts in daily routines with your preschooler. For example:
   - Cooking. "Let's divide the cookie dough into two parts so we can bake some now and put the rest into the freezer."
   - Home projects. "We're going to hang this picture 6 inches above the bookshelf in your room."
   - Home chores. "How many plates do we need on the table? One for Mommy, one for Daddy, and one for Jenny."

2. Talk about numbers that matter most to your preschooler—her age, her address, her phone number, her height and weight. Focusing on these personal numbers helps your child learn many important math concepts, including:
   - Time (hours, days, months, years; older, younger; yesterday, today, tomorrow). To a young child, you might say, "At 2 o'clock we will take a nap." When you plan with an older preschooler (4 or 5 years old), you could point out, "It's only 3 days until we go to Grandma's

house. Let's put an X on the calendar so we'll know the day we're going."

- Lengths (inches, feet; longer, taller, shorter). "This ribbon is too short to go around the present for Aunt Susan. Let's cut a longer ribbon."
- Weight (ounces, pounds, grams; heavier, lighter; how to use scales). "You already weigh 30 pounds. I can hardly lift such a big girl."
- Where you live (addresses, telephone numbers). "These shiny numbers on our apartment door are 2-1-4. We live in apartment number 214." Or "When you go to play at Terry's house, take this note along with you. It's our phone number: 253-6711. Some day soon you will know our phone number so you can call me when you are at your friend's."

3. Provide opportunities for your child to learn math. For example:

- Blocks can teach children to classify objects by color and shape. Blocks can also help youngsters learn about depth, width, height, and length.
- Games that have scoring, such as throwing balls into a basket, require children to count. Introduce games such as dominoes or rolling dice. Have your child roll the dice and count the dots. Let her try to roll for matches. Count favorite toys.
- Books often have number themes or ideas. Some of these are listed in the appendices section at the end of this book.

Getting Along

Learning to get along with others is very important. Children who are kind, helpful, patient, and loving generally do better in school.

What you'll need

No materials required

What to do

1. Let your child know that you are glad to be his mommy or daddy. Give him personal attention and encouragement. Set aside time when you and your child can do fun things together. Your happy feelings toward your child will help him feel good about himself.

2. Set a good example. Show your preschooler what it means to get along with others and to be respectful. Say "please" and "thank you." Treat people in ways that show you care what happens to them. Ask for things in a friendly way. Be kind to and patient with other people.

3. Help your child find ways to solve conflicts with others. Help your child figure out what will happen if he tries to settle his mad feelings by hitting a playmate: "James, I know that Tiffany took your toy truck. But if you hit Tiffany and you have a big fight, then Tiffany will have to go

home, and the two of you won't be able to play any more today. What is another way that you can let Tiffany know you want your truck back?"

James might decide to tell Tiffany that he's mad, and that he wants his truck back. Or he might let Tiffany play with his truck for 5 minutes with the hope that Tiffany will then give it back. Listening to your children's problems will often be all that is needed for them to solve their own problems.

4. Make opportunities to share and to care. Let your child take charge of providing food for hungry birds. When a new family moves into the neighborhood, let your preschooler help make cookies to welcome them.

5. Be physically affectionate. Children need hugs, kisses, an arm over the shoulder, and a pat on the back.

6. Tell your child that you love him. Don't assume that your loving actions will speak for themselves (although those are very important). Teach your child the international hand sign for "I love you." You can "sign" each other love as your child leaves home for the first day of kindergarten.

Children need good social skills. Teachers and other children will enjoy your youngster's company if he gets along well with others.

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My Book

Most 4-year-olds like to talk and have a lot to say. They generally can't write down words themselves, but they enjoy dictating a story to you.

What you'll need

Paper
A paper punch
Blunt-tipped scissors
Pencil, pen, crayons
Yarn, pipe cleaners, or staples
Paste

What to do

1. Make a booklet of five or six pages. Your child can help punch holes close to one edge and thread yarn through the holes to keep the pages together. You can also bind the book with twisted pipe cleaners, or staple the pages together.

2. On the outside cover, write your child's name. Explain to him that this is going to be a book about him.

3. Let your child decide what will go on each page. Write it down. Examples: Other people in my family. My favorite toys. My favorite books. My friends. My pet. My neighborhood. My home (or my bedroom). My own drawings.

Making this book will help your child develop his language skills and give him more practice using the small muscles in his hands. Your 4-year-old will also love having your undivided attention.

What About Kindergarten?

The activities in this book can help your child from birth to age 5 get ready for kindergarten. As the first day of school approaches, however, you may want to do *extra* things to make the school seem a friendlier place for both you and your child.

Find out as much as you can about the school before your child enters it. You will want to learn

- The principal's name;
- The kindergarten teacher's name;
- When to register for kindergarten and what forms need to be filled out;
- What immunizations are required for school entry;
- A description of the kindergarten program;
- The kindergarten yearly calendar and daily schedule;
- Transportation procedures;
- Food service arrangements; and
- How you can become involved in your child's education and in the school.

Some schools will send you this information. Or they may hold an orientation meeting in the spring for parents who expect to enroll their children in kindergarten the following fall. If they don't, you can call the principal's office to ask or to arrange a visit.

Find out in advance what the school expects from entering kindergarten students. If you know a year or two ahead of time, you will be in a better position to prepare your child. Sometimes parents and caregivers don't think the expectations are right for their children. If that is the case, you may want to meet with the principal or kindergarten teachers to talk about the expectations and ways to change the kindergarten program.

Visit the school with your child so your child can become familiar with it, and it won't seem scary. Walk

up and down the hallways to learn where things are. Observe the other children and the classrooms.

Talk with your child about school. During your visit, make positive comments about the school—your good attitude will rub off! ("Look at all the boys and girls painting in this classroom. Doesn't that look like fun!") Tell your child about what the children do when classes begin.

Talk about the teachers, and how they will help your child learn new things. Encourage your child to look at the teacher as a wise friend toward whom children should be courteous. Explain to your child how important it is to go to class each day.

If possible, **consider volunteering to help out in the school.** The staff may appreciate having an extra adult to help do everything from passing out paper and pencils in the classrooms to supervising on the playground. Volunteering is a good way to learn more about the school and to meet its staff and other parents.

When the long-awaited first day of kindergarten arrives, go to school with your child (but don't stay too long). And be patient. Many young children are overwhelmed at first because they haven't had much experience in dealing with new situations. They may not immediately like school. Your child may cry or cling to you when you say goodbye each morning, but with support from you and the kindergarten teacher, this can rapidly change.

As your child proceeds through school, you will need to continue your encouragement and involvement. But for now, celebrate all that you have accomplished as a parent. Share your children's enthusiasm. Let them know how proud you are as they leave home for their first day of kindergarten. Let them know you believe they will succeed.

Good Television Habits

Children in the United States have watched an average of 4,000 hours of television by the time they begin school. Most experts agree that this is too much. But banning television isn't the answer, because good television can spark curiosity and open up new worlds to children. Monitoring how much and what television children watch helps them, starting at an early age, to develop good viewing habits.

Too much television can be harmful because

- It can expose children to too much sex and violence;
- Children can be unduly influenced by junk-food and toy commercials;
- It can give children a poor model for good behavior before they have developed a clear idea of right and wrong;
- Young children do not have the experience and wisdom to understand complicated plots or scary scenes; and
- Sitting passively in front of the set for extended periods of time can slow young children's social and intellectual development.

Here are some tips to help children develop good television-viewing habits.

Keep a record of how many hours of TV your children watch, and what they watch. Generally, it's good to limit the amount to 2 hours or less a day, although you can make exceptions for special programs.

Learn about current TV programs and videos and select good ones. As parents, you know your children best. So, select TV programs and videos that are meaningful to your family. Some TV programs you may wish to consider include "Captain Kangaroo," Eureeka's Castle," "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood," Sesame Street," and "Shining Time Station." Many other good children's programs, such as Disney and Nickelodeon, are on public television stations and on cable channels.

If you have a VCR, you may wish to seek out videos made by Linda Ellerbee's Lucky Duck Productions. Of course, videos vary in quality, but versions of classic children's books, such as Babar or Snow White, are a good place to start.

Parents who would like help in finding good TV programs for children can subscribe to *Parents' Choice*, a quarterly review of children's media which includes television programs and home video materials. Write to Parents' Choice Foundation, Box 185, Newton, MA 02168. A subscription is $18 a year. A sample copy is $2.

You can also read about programs in TV columns in newspapers and magazines. Cable subscribers and public broadcasting contributors can check monthly program guides for information.

Plan with your children (starting at age 3) what programs to watch. After selecting programs appropriate for your children, help them decide which ones to watch. Turn the TV on when these shows start, and turn the set off when they are over.

Watch television with your children so you can answer questions and talk about what they see. Pay special attention to how they respond so you can help them understand what they're seeing, if that's needed.

Follow-up TV viewing with activities or games. You might have your child tell you a new word he learned on television that you can look up together in the dictionary. Or you might have him make up his own story about one of his favorite TV characters.

Include the whole family in discussion and activities or games that relate to television programs. Older siblings, aunts, uncles, and grandparents can all contribute.

Make certain that television isn't regularly used as a babysitter. Instead, try to balance good television with other fun activities for your child.

Choosing Child Care

More and more children are in preschool or other child care settings before they enter kindergarten. Choosing the right child care is important because it can affect how prepared your child is for school. Some tips to guide you:

Think about the kind of care you want for your child. Possibilities include (a) a relative; (b) a family day care provider, usually a woman who takes care of a small group of children in her home; (c) a child care center, which generally offers a curriculum and staff with educational backgrounds in early childhood development; and (d) a caregiver who comes into your home.

Figure out what suits your budget and what you can expect to spend in your community. This probably will influence the kind of care you select. Talk with friends who have young children and with child care centers to gather information. Remember that when someone comes into your home, you may need to pay federal and state payroll taxes. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) can guide you.

For low-income parents, the federally funded Head Start program (and in some communities Chapter 1 programs) are available. State-subsidized child care programs also are available, although most often more people need the subsidized care than there are spaces available. Many families are entitled to the child care credit on their income tax forms.

Recognize that there are many ways to find good care. Ask friends and neighbors how they found child care. See if they, or any day care providers you may know and trust, can recommend any good people or facilities. Look in the Yellow Pages of your telephone book under "Child Care Centers." Look in the classified ads of your local newspaper, or place an ad of your own. Put up notices on your church or synagogue bulletin board, in grocery stores, local community centers, or at the employment office of local colleges or universities. Look for notices that other people have put up.

If you are looking for a family day care provider, a local licensing agency can provide you with local listings. Many communities have resource and referral agencies that help parents identify the options that best meet their needs.

Start looking early, particularly if you have a special program for your child in mind. Some programs have long waiting lists. Some may even require you to get on a waiting list before your child is born.

Gather information. If you are looking for a family day care provider or for a person to come into your home, interview the person at length and check references. Before you meet with them, develop a list of questions. If you are looking at day care centers, visit them—more than once, if possible. Just because a person or a program worked for someone else doesn't mean it's right for you. With any kind of child care, check references.

No matter what kind of child care you are considering, look for caregivers who

- Are kind and responsive. Good caregivers are affectionate, enjoy children, are energetic enough to keep up with your preschooler, patient, and mature enough to handle crises and conflicts.
- Have experience with preschoolers and like them. Find out how long they have worked with preschoolers, why they are in the early child care field, and whether they provide activities that are appropriate for your child's age. Observe the caregivers with children. Do the children seem happy? How do the caregivers respond to them?
- Recognize the individual needs of your child. Look for caregivers who are considerate of different children's interests and needs and who can provide your child with enough attention.

- Share a child-rearing philosophy that is similar to yours. Find out what kind of discipline is used and how problems are handled.

Be certain that the child care facility is clean and safe and is filled with things to explore that are appropriate for your child's age. Spend time in the center to make sure you feel comfortable. The center should involve parents and allow them to drop in at any time.

After your child is in child care, keep track of what is happening. At the end of each day, find out if there were any problems, what your child ate, and what your child did. Discuss any problems as they arise. If over a period of time your child seems unhappy at day care, go back to observe and talk with the caregiver. Some children just take a while to adjust. Others may be in a setting or with a person who isn't right for them; in this case, you may need to make other arrangements. Keep in mind, too, that your child's needs may change. A person or program that was great for your infant may not be right by the time your child turns 3.

For more information on child care, see the list of publications at the end of this book.

Ready-for-School Checklist

This checklist, although not exhaustive, can help to guide you in preparing your child for school. It's best to look at the items included as goals toward which to aim. They should be done, as much as possible, through everyday life or by fun activities you've planned with your child. If your child lags behind in some areas, don't worry. Remember that all children are unique. They grow and develop at different rates—and no one thing guarantees that a child is ready for school.

Good Health and Physical Well-Being

My child:

- Eats a balanced diet.
- Receives regular medical and dental care and has had all the necessary immunizations.
- Gets plenty of rest.
- Runs, jumps, plays outdoors, and does other activities that help develop large muscles and provide exercise.
- Works puzzles, scribbles, colors, paints, and does other activities that help develop small muscles.

Social and Emotional Preparation

My child:

- Is learning to be confident enough to explore and try new things.
- Is learning to work well alone and to do many tasks for himself.
- Has many opportunities to be with other children and is learning to cooperate with them.
- Is curious and is motivated to learn.
- Is learning to finish tasks (for example, picks up own toys).
- Is learning to use self-control.
- Can follow simple instructions.
- Helps with family chores.

Language and General Knowledge

My child:

- Has many opportunities to play.
- Is read to every day.
- Has access to books and other reading materials.
- Has his television viewing monitored by an adult.
- Is encouraged to ask questions.
- Is encouraged to solve problems.
- Has opportunities to notice similarities and differences.
- Is encouraged to sort and classify things (for example, by looking for red cars on the highway).
- Is learning to write his name and address.
- Is learning to count and plays counting games.
- Is learning to identify shapes and colors.
- Has opportunities to draw, listen to and make music, and to dance.
- Has opportunities to get firsthand experiences to do things in the world—to see and touch objects, hear new sounds, smell and taste foods, and watch things move.

Community Resources

Many services and resources are available in your community that can help make it easier and more fun to be a parent or caregiver. Look for:

Classes for parents. Hospitals often have good videos on caring for newborns. Many courses are available to provide information on everything from infant and child development to family stress and changes. Classes take place at local schools, Y.W.C.A.s and Y.M.C.A.s, community colleges, hospitals, or universities. Some states and school districts offer programs that provide mothers and father with information on how to be better parents.

Children with special needs. If you have any reason to suspect your child is not developing normally, it is important to seek help as soon as possible. The earlier children with special needs receive treatment, the greater their chances are for realizing their potential. Again, the best place to start is with your doctor or clinic. Special organizations and agencies also provide information and support.

Food services for the disadvantaged. Federal, state, and local assistance is available for low-income parents who are concerned about providing their children with nutritious food. Food stamps are issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture for some low-income people. WIC (Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children) is a federally funded food program for low-income pregnant and breast-feeding women and for their infants and young children. Call your local or state health department to find out if you are eligible. In addition, the Salvation Army, as well as some churches and shelters, provide emergency food services in some communities.

Safety resources. Many doctors and clinics provide information on how to make your home safe for your child. Contact your state automobile association for booklets on traffic safety for young children. The Consumer Product Safety Commission provides publications on consumer and safety issues. Local police and fire departments often provide information on how to protect yourself against crime and on fire safety.

Parks and recreation. Many local park and recreation departments offer free or low-cost tiny-tot programs designed to expose young children to a range of activities, such as dramatics and music. Local Y.W.C.A.s and Y.M.C.A.s may offer similar programs for preschoolers.

Libraries. Most libraries now provide a variety of children's books, magazines, cassette tapes and videotapes of children's songs, and even puppets and educational toys; trained children's librarians who can help you find appropriate books and other materials; and special programs and activities for preschoolers (and sometimes parents), such as storytelling, fingerplays, songs, rhymes, puppet shows, and arts and crafts. Some libraries even provide areas with pillows or small tables where preschoolers can look at books, put together puzzles, or play with puppets.

Zoos. Farms or zoos encourage children's interest in the natural world and introduce them to the many fascinating forms of life. A local 4-H Club can advise you on visiting a farm.

Museums. Many communities have special children's museums that provide opportunities for hands-on activities. Science or natural history museums often have rooms where children can do everything from touch sea shells to stroke animal skins. Consult a librarian, the Yellow Pages of your telephone book, a local guidebook, or the local newspapers for lists of resources or special exhibits.

Notes

Text Notes

The following notes refer to the text portion of this booklet.

Pages 1-12 draw from Powell, Douglas R., (1991). "Strengthening Parental Contributions to School Readiness and Early School Learning." This paper was prepared for the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, July 1991.

Page 3. The National Education Goals Panel has identified five areas as being important to success in school: health and physical well-being; social and emotional maturity; approaches to learning; language development; and general knowledge.

Page 3. Katz, Dr. Lilian G., (1992). "Readiness: Children and Their Schools," in ERIC Review, Volume 2, Issue 1. U.S. Department of Education.

Pages 6-7. Rich, Dorothy, (1988). *MegaSkills*. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

Pages 8-9. Belbas, Nancy, Smerlinder, Julienne, and Stranik, Mary Kay, (1986). *Middle of the Night Baby Book*, The Body Press, Tucson, AZ, 70-71. Also see *Love & Learn: Discipline for Young Children*, (1989), and *Helping Children Learn Self-Control: A Guide to Discipline*. Brochures from the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington, DC.

Pages 10-11. Binkley, Marilyn R., (1988). *Becoming a Nation of Readers: What Parents Can Do*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC.

Page 11. Charren, Peggy, and Hulsizer, Carol, (1986). *The TV-Smart Book for Kids* and *Parents' Guide for The TV-Smart Book for Kids*. E.P. Dutton, New York.

Pages 15-44. The following publications were used to develop the "What to expect" and the "What they need" features found throughout the activities section:

> Karnes, M.B. (1979, 1981). *Small Wonder! 1* and *Small Wonder! 2*. American Guidance Service, Circle Pines, MN.
>
> Miller, Karen, (1984, 1984, 1985). *Things to Do with Toddlers and Twos*, *More Things to Do With Toddlers and Twos*, and *Ages and Stages*. Telshare Publishing Co., Inc., Chelsea, MA.
>
> MYM/MELD, (dates unavailable). *Parent/Child Activities (when baby's three months old or younger)*, *Toys and Games for Babies (3-12 months old)*, and *Toys, Activities, Books, Etc. (for toddlers)*. Brochures. Minneapolis, MN.
>
> North Carolina Department of Human Resources, Child/Daycare Section, (date unavailable). *Children, Children, Children: Understanding Them—Helping Them Grow*. Series of brochures on child development.
>
> Oklahoma State Department of Health, (date unavailable). *For Parents' Sake*. Oklahoma City, OK.
>
> Sears, William, M.D. (1989). *Your Baby: The First Twelve Months*. Barron's Educational Series, Inc., Hauppauge, NY.
>
> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, (1988). *Picturing Development*, Washington, DC.
>
> University of California, Cooperative Extension, *Parent Express, A Month-by-Month Newsletter for You and Your Baby*.

Page 47. "Good Television Habits" is drawn in part from Belbas and Charren.

Pages 48-49. "Choosing Child Care" is drawn in part from the following National Association for the Education of Young Children brochures: *How to Choose a Good Early Childhood Program; Finding the Best Care for Your Infant or Toddler; Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Infants*; and *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Toddlers*. Washington, DC. See also Van der Zande, Irene, (1990). *1, 2, 3 . . . The Toddler Years*. Santa Cruz Toddler Care Center, Santa Cruz, CA.

"Activities" Notes

The activities were adapted in part from the following sources:

"Developing Trust" from *Small Wonder! 1* by M.B. Karnes (1979); from *Parent/Child Activities (when baby's three months old or younger)* by MYM/MELD (date unavailable); and from *Growing to Love Books* by the New York Public Library's Early Childhood Project.

"Moving On" from *Things to Do With Toddlers and Twos* by Karen Miller (1984); and from *Small Wonder! 2* by M.B. Karnes (1981).

"Shop till You Drop" from *Small Wonder! 1, Small Wonder! 2* by M.B. Karnes (1979, 1981); and from *Playtime Learning Games for Young Children* by Alice S. Honig (1982). Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, NY.

"Puppet Magic" from *More Things to Do With Toddlers and Twos* by Karen Miller (1984); and from *Encouraging the Artist in Your Child* by Sally Warner (1989). St. Martin's Press, New York.

"Read to Me!" from *Becoming a Nation of Readers: What Parents Can Do* by Marilyn R. Binkley (1988); from *Helping Children Learn About Reading* by Judith A. Schickedanz, a brochure from the National Association for the Education of Young Children; and from *The New Read-Aloud Handbook* by Jim Trelease (1989). Penguin Books, New York.

"Music Makers" from *Middle of the Night Baby Book* by Nancy Belbas et al (1986); from *Small Wonder! 1* and *Small Wonder! 2* by M.B. Karnes (1979, 1981); and from *Things to Do With Toddlers and Twos* by Karen Miller (1984).

"Play Dough" from *Bananas Guide*, written by staff of BANANAS Child Care Information and Referral Service for Families in Alameda County (1982). Wingbow Press, Berkeley, CA; and from *Things to Do With Toddlers and Twos* by Karen Miller (1984).

"Kitchen Cut-Ups" from *Bananas Guide*, written by staff of BANANAS Child Care Information and Referral Service for Families in Alameda County (1982). Wingbow Press, Berkeley, CA.

"Scribble, Paint, and Paste" from *Bananas Guide*, written by staff of BANANAS Child Care Information and Referral Service for Families in Alameda County (1982). Wingbow Press, Berkeley, CA; from *Things to Do With Toddlers and Twos* by Karen Miller (1984); and from *Encouraging the Artist in Your Child* by Sally Warner (1989).

"Chores!" from *Playtime Learning Games for Young Children* by Alice S. Honig (1982); and from *1001 Things to Do With Your Kids* by Caryl Waller Krueger (1988). Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN.

"Hands-on Math" from *More Than 1, 2, 3—The Real Basics of Mathematics* by Janet Brown McCracker (1987), a brochure from the National Association for the Education of Young Children; and from *101 Amusing Ways to Develop Your Child's Thinking Skills and Creativity* by Sarina Simon (1989). Lowell House, Los Angeles.

"Getting Along" from *Playtime Learning Games for Young Children* by Susan S. Honig; and from *Encouraging the Artist in Your Child* by Sally Warner (1989).

"My Book" from *Early Learning Fun Pre-School Readiness Kit* by the E.L.F. Task Force (1976). West Aurora Public Schools, Aurora, IL.

Books

Listed below are a few of the many good books available for parents and their children. The Consumer Information Center also has many booklets and pamphlets available free or for a small fee. For a free catalog, write to Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009.

For parents

Belbas, Nancy; Smerlinder, Julienne; and Stranik, Mary Kay, (1986). *Middle of the Night Baby Book.* The Body Press, a division of HPBooks, Inc., Tucson, AZ.

Brazelton, T. Berry, (1986). *Infants and Mothers: Differences in Development*, revised edition. Dell, New York.

_____ (1986). *Toddlers and Parents: A Declaration of Independence.* Dell, New York.

Galinsky, Ellen, (1988). *The Preschool Years.* Time Books, New York.

Miller, Karen, (1985). *Ages and Stages: Developmental Descriptions and Activities Birth Through Eight Years.* Telshare Publishing Co., Inc., Chelsea, MA.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) booklets and brochures available for a small fee include:

- *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Infants;*
- *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Toddlers;*
- *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Younger Preschoolers;*
- *Finding the Best Care for Your Infant or Toddler;*
- *Good Teaching Practices for Older Preschoolers and Kindergartners;*
- *Helping Children Learn About Reading;*
- *Helping Children Learn Self-Control;*
- *How to Choose a Good Early Childhood Program;*
- *Love & Learn: Discipline for Young Children;*
- *Ready or Not . . . What Parents Should Know About School Readiness;* and
- *Young Children and Picture Books—Literature From Infancy to Six.*

For copies call NAEYC at (202) 232-8777 or (800) 424-2460, or write to them at 1834 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009-5786.

National Black Child Development Institute, Inc., *Selecting Child Care: A Checklist.* Available for $3 by writing the institute at 1463 Rhode Island Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20005.

White, Burton L. (1987). *The First Three Years of Life*, revised edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Activity and song books

Beall, Pamela C., and Nipp, Susan, *Wee Sing* (1982) and *Wee Sing and Play* (1983). Price Stern Sloan, Inc., Los Angeles, CA.

Brown, Marc, ed, (1985). *Hand Rhymes.* Dutton Children's Books, New York.

Bryan, Ashley, (1991). *All Night, All Day: A Child's First Book of African-American Spirituals.* Atheneum, New York.

Hart, Jane, ed, (1991). *Singing Bee! A Collection of Favorite Children's Songs.* William Morrow and Company, New York.

Honig, Alice S., (1982). *Playtime Learning Games for Young Children.* Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, NY.

Krueger, Caryl Waller, (1988). *1001 Things To Do With Your Kids.* Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN.

Miller, Karen, (1984). *Things To Do With Toddlers and Twos.* Telshare Publishing Co., Inc., PO Box 679, Marshfield, MA 02050.

Rich, Dorothy, (1988). *MegaSkills®: How Families Can Help Children Succeed in School and Beyond.* Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, MA.

Simon, Sarina, (1989). *101 Amusing Ways to Develop Your Child's Thinking Skills and Creativity.* Lowell House, Los Angeles, CA.

Warner, Sally, (1989). *Encouraging the Artist in Your Child (Even If You Can't Draw).* St. Martin's Press, New York.

Yolen, Jane, ed, (1986). *The Lullaby Songbook.* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, New York.

For preschoolers

Some of the many good books available for preschool children follow. Many of these suggestions came from Jim Trelease in *The Read Aloud Handbook*; from the New York Public Library's Early Childhood Project; from a list produced by the Cuyahoga County Public Library through its federally funded Project LEAP; and from *African American Literature for Young Children*, a brochure developed by the National Black Child Development Institute (available for 50 cents from the National Association for the Education of Young Children). For other suggestions, check with your local librarian.

Ahlberg, Janet and Allan, (1983). *The Baby's Catalogue.* Little, Brown & Co., Boston, MA.

Aliki, (1988). *Digging up Dinosaurs*, revised edition. HarperCollins Children's Books, New York.

Anderson, Hans Christian, (1979). *The Princess and the Pea*; Gladone, Paul, illustrator. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

Bang, Molly, (1983). *Ten, Nine, Eight.* Greenwillow Books, New York.

Bemelmans, Ludwig, (1939). *Madeline.* Viking Children's Books, New York.

Breinburg, Petrolella, (1973). *Shawn Goes to School.* Harper & Row, New York.

Brooks, Gwendolyn, (1956). *Bronzeville Boys and Girls.* Harper & Row, New York.

Brown, Margaret Wise, (1947). *Goodnight Moon.* HarperCollins Children's Books, New York.

Caines, Jeannette, (1984). *Abby.* HarperCollins Children's Books, New York.

Carle, Eric, (1981). *The Very Hungry Caterpillar.* Putnam Publishing Group, New York.

Clifton, Lucille, (1988). *Everette Anderson's Goodbye.* Henry Holt & Co., New York.

_____ (1978). *Everette Anderson's Nine Month Long.* Henry Holt & Co., New York.

Day, Alexander, (1985). *Good Dog, Carl.* Green Tiger Press, Portland, ME.

de Paola, Tomie, (1985). *Tomie de Paola's Mother Goose.* Putnam Publishing Group, New York.

Dr. Seuss, (1940). *Horton Hatches the Egg.* Random House, Inc., New York.

Feelings, Muriel, (1971). *Mojo Means One: A Swahili Counting Book.* Dial Press, New York.

Flack, Marjorie, (1968). *Ask Mr. Bear.* Macmillan Children's Book Group, New York.

Freeman, Don, (1968). *Corduroy.* Viking Children's Books, New York.

Galdone, Paul, (1981). *The Three Billy Goats Gruff.* Ticknor & Fields, New York.

Greenfield, Eloise, (1977). *Africa Dream.* The John Day Co., New York.

_____ (1991). *My Doll, Keshia.* Writers and Readers Publishing, Inc., New York.

Havill, Juanita, (1989). *Jamaica's Find.* Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

Hill, Eric, (1980). *Where's Spot?* Putnam Publishing Group, New York.

Hoban, Russell, (1978). *Bedtime for Frances.* HarperCollins Children's Books, New York.

Hoban, Tana, (1987). *26 Letters and 99 Cents.* Greenwillow Books, New York.

Kunhardt, Dorothy, (1942). *Pat the Bunny.* Western Publishing Co., Inc., New York.

Leaf, Munro, (1936). *The Story of Ferdinand.* Viking Children's Books, New York.

Mahy, Margaret, (1990). *The Seven Chinese Brothers.* Scholastic, Inc., New York.

Martin, Jr., Bill, (1989). *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom.* Simon & Schuster Trade, New York.

McCloskey, Robert, (1941). *Make Way for Ducklings.* Viking Children's Books, New York.

Milne, A.A. (1988). *Winnie-the-Pooh*; Shephard, Ernest, illustrator. Dutton Children's Books, New York.

_____ (1988). *Now We Are Six*; Shephard, Ernest, illustrator. Dutton Children's Books, New York.

Mosel, Arlene, (1968). *Tikki Tikki Tembo.* Henry Holt & Co., New York.

Ormerod, Jan, (1984). *101 Things to Do With a Baby.* Lothrop, Lee & Shephard Books, New York.

Oxenbury, Helen, (1987). *Clap Hands.* Macmillan Children's Book Group, New York.

Parish, Peggy, (1963). *Amelia Bedelia.* HarperCollins Children's Books, New York.

Piper, Watty, retel. *The Little Engine that Could.* Putnam Publishing Group, New York.

Potter, Beatrix, (1984). *The Complete Adventures of Peter Rabbit.* Puffin Books, New York.

Prelutsky, Jack, (selected by), (1986). *Read-Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young.* Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

Rey, H.A., (1941, 1973). *Curious George.* Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

Rockwell, Anne, (1975). *The Three Bears and 15 Other Stories.* HarperCollins Children's Books, New York.

Sendak, Maurice, (1988). *Where the Wild Things Are.* HarperCollins Children's Books, New York.

Viorst, Judith, (1972). *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day.* Macmillan Children's Group, New York.

White, E.B., (1952). *Charlotte's Web.* HarperCollins Children's Books, New York.

Wildsmith, Brian, (1987). *One, Two, Three.* Oxford University Press, New York.

Williams, Margery, (1985). *The Velveteen Rabbit.* Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., New York.

Zion, Gene, (1956). *Harry the Dirty Dog.* HarperCollins Children's Books, New York.

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Annie Lunsford has been a freelance illustrator since 1975. Her works include a Children's Hospital calendar, a book for Ronald McDonald House, slide shows for the National Institutes of Health, and a Christmas card for Ringling Brothers. Her work has been recognized by The Advertising Club of New York, the Society of Illustrators, and The Printing Industry of America. Lunsford lives and works in Arlington, Virginia.

What We Can Do To Help Our Children Learn:

Listen to them and pay attention to their problems.

Read with them.

Tell family stories.

Limit their television watching.

Have books and other reading materials in the house.

Look up words in the dictionary with them.

Encourage them to use an encyclopedia.

Share favorite poems and songs with them.

Take them to the library—and get them their own library cards.

Take them to museums and historical sites, when possible.

Discuss the daily news with them.

Go exploring with them and learn about plants, animals, and geography.

Find a quiet place for them to study.

Review their homework.

Meet with their teachers.

Do you have other ideas?

For sale by the U.S. Government Printing Office
Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop: SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-9328

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research
and Improvement